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RHMFISS/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUSFNSG/CDR10THASG TORII STATION JA
RHMFISS/CG FIRST MAW
RUHBABA/CG III MEF CAMP COURTNEY JA
RUHBBA/CG THIRD FSSG CAMP KINSER JA
RUHBABA/CG THIRD MARDIV
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/COMFLEACT OKINAWA JA
RHMFISS/COMMARCORBASESJAPAN CAMP BUTLER JA
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RHHMHAA/COMPACFLT PEARL HARBOR HI
RHOVVKG/COMSEVENTHFLT
RUHBVMA/CTF 76
RUYLBAH/DODSPECREP OKINAWA JA
RUESOK/FBIS OKINAWA JA
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 0259
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 0850
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/NAVCRIMINVSERVRA OKINAWA JA
RUHBANB/OKINAWA AREA FLD OFC US FORCES JAPAN CAMP BUTLER JA
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 0334
RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO 0294
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 0087
RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI 0037
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0791
RHMFISS/USARPAC COMMAND CENTER FT SHAFTER HI
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 NAHA 000089

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SUBJECT: FIRST USN CIVILIAN PORT CALL IN OKINAWA A SUCCESS

CLASSIFIED BY: Kevin K. Maher, Consul General, U.S. Consulate General, Naha, Japan, Department of State.

REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (d)

¶1. (S) The mine countermeasures ships USS Guardian (MCM 5) and USS Patriot (MCM 7) conducted the first USN call on a civilian port in Okinawa Prefecture since Okinawa's 1972 reversion to Japan, successfully visiting Sonai Port on Yonaguni Island June 24-26. This port call to Japan's westernmost point, located only seventy miles from Taiwan, was operationally significant. While available logistical support on this island of less than 1,700 residents is minimal, we determined that Sonai Port is deep enough for safe access by USN mine countermeasures ships, and that in all likelihood four mine countermeasures ships could fit into the port at one time. Yonaguni Island also has a commercial airfield less than two miles from Sonai Port, with a 2,000 meter runway and a small tarmac. If helicopters used this airfield in support of mine countermeasures ships, Yonaguni Island, as the Japanese territory forward located closest to Taiwan, foreseeably could become a hub for mine countermeasures operations in the event of a contingency in the Taiwan Straits.

¶2. (C) There were some protesters on site opposing the visit, but these were not beyond the scale of protests we have seen at other civilian ports in Japan. However, an important issue raised by their presence was poor access control to the dock area, which created force protection issues. The protest group, numbering around fifty by our count, was able to walk freely past the access control point and proceed directly to ship side. The group then stood on the dock, preventing the ship from

lowering its ladder, and delaying access to the ship for about two hours. The Okinawa Prefectural Government (OPG) Port Authority personnel on site made no visible attempt to restrict the protestors from entering the site, and the very small Okinawa Prefectural Police (OPP) presence was unable to remove the protestors, until they voluntarily moved away when their demonstration permit expired at 1600.

13. (C) It is not entirely clear to us whether this poor access control was the result of the Port Authority personnel's inexperience, incompetence, or a decision made by the OPG not to cooperate. (Prior to the port call, the OPG had asked that the U.S. show "self restraint" and cancel it.) It was probably a combination of all three. Dock access control was improved the second night of the visit, with the OPP and Port Authority presence supplemented with personnel from Ishigaki Island. The Japan Coast Guard (JCG) had a ship on visible guard duty at the entrance to the port during the minesweepers' June 24 arrival, but there was no visible JCG presence for most of June 25. We were told that a JCG ship was "on standby" nearby. The JCG ship was visible near the port entrance for the June 26 departure. We advised the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) representatives on site, and the OPP and OPG Port Authority, that access control and force protection must be improved in the future, stressing that this is a safety issue both for our ships and for the local people and the demonstrators themselves.

14. (SBU) MOFA's presence on site was a significant development. This was the first time MOFA dispatched personnel in advance of a USN port call. MOFA Status of Forces Division Director Iizawa was accompanied by MOFA's Okinawa liaison office Deputy Chief Hideaki Kuramitsu and staff member Shunji Tanaka. The MOFA personnel were engaged and helpful. Tanaka joined ConGen Naha and Commander, Naval Forces Japan (CNFJ) staff in Yonaguni three days before the port call, and he was of great assistance in coordinating with local people.

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15. (C) We believe that the access control problem was a good case study for MOFA. The MOFA representatives learned the central government needs to better coordinate with local authorities on issues like this, which will be relevant to overall bilateral defense planning, particularly with respect to using civilian Japanese ports and airports for transloading and other operations. For example, SOFA Division Director Iizawa told the Consul General that, after working diligently behind the scenes to coordinate with the OPG Port Authority and the OPP to provide better access control, he discovered there is great ambiguity as to which organization is responsible for controlling access and dealing with other crowd control issues. Iizawa said he is now aware the Japanese Government needs to work on this particular coordination problem, and on the broader issue of getting local authorities' cooperation with defense operations. Iizawa said he would report this directly to Foreign Minister Aso when he briefs him on the port call upon his return to Tokyo. Hopefully this will have a positive impact on central government and local government coordination for overall bilateral defense planning in other areas as well.

16. (SBU) Supportive Yonaguni Island residents told us that of the fifty or so protestors at the port, only seven live in Yonaguni. The remainder appeared to be mostly from the main island of Okinawa and from nearby Ishigaki Island. The ringleader was a well-known professional agitator from Naha. We found the overall climate on Yonaguni Island to be welcoming and positive about the visit. Local press reports also noted that many residents supported the visit, even though the Mayor had declared his opposition. The town assembly itself voted three to two to welcome the visit. The assembly members who voted in support attended a welcome dinner hosted by a local resident for the ships' officers, and stressed repeatedly to us that the protestors were "outsiders" and that USN ships are welcome in Yonaguni. We heard this from many other residents as well. MOFA's Iizawa, who attended the welcome dinner, also told Consul General he was surprised to see first hand how many residents

were supportive. The view from Tokyo is often focused only on the opposition, he said, so it was useful to see the warmth of the local reception.

17. (C) The precedent now has been set for USN port calls to civilian ports in Okinawa. Two of the Yonaguni city assembly members who supported the visit told the Consul General that they hope such ship visits will become routine. When asked what frequency would be desirable, they responded that at least once a year would be good. The Consulate General supports this view.

18. (C) The Consulate General also would welcome a USN port call to Ishigaki Island sometime after the July 29 Upper House Diet election. When the Consul General informally sounded out Ishigaki Mayor Ohama in mid-May about the possibility of a port call, Ohama's private initial reaction was that getting a berth might be difficult since "it is a busy port" but that anchoring out would not be such a problem. He understood that due to our Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) Article 5 rights, he has no authority to prevent a port call. However, a few days later he went to the press stating that he would oppose a military ship visit to Ishigaki. Not long after that, news of the call in Yonaguni spread. The local media have interpreted this course

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of events as meaning we cancelled a planned visit to Ishigaki due to the Mayor's opposition, and decided to go to (politically conservative) Yonaguni instead. In Consul General's view, we should not let stand a perception that local opposition can stop a port call and deny us our SOFA Article 5 right of access. We understand that some USN ships returning from exercises in points south may be returning to Japan in late August or early September, and look forward to further discussing the possibility of a port call to Ishigaki at that time. If the decision is made to call at Ishigaki, we think that the force protection issues we saw at Yonaguni may be easier to solve since most of the OPG Port Authority and OPP personnel at Yonaguni had been dispatched from Ishigaki, and they now have a better practical understanding of the need for proper access control.

19. (U) The Consul General wishes to thank commanding officers LCDR Steven DeMoss and LCDR Thomas Shultz, and the entire officer contingent and crew of USS Guardian and USS Patriot, for their outstanding professionalism in making this sensitive port call a great success. Consul General was told by several Okinawa-based reporters, who are not known for their sympathetic view of the U.S. military presence, that in the face of often obnoxious vocal protesters, "the U.S. Navy sailors are true gentlemen and professionals." We can't say it any better than that. Well done - you are truly outstanding ambassadors for the United States.

110. (U) Thanks also to the CNFJ personnel who came to Yonaguni to support this visit. We could not have gotten it done without them. In particular, we appreciated the great work done by Mr. Akira Cibulka from N3/N5/N7 and Ms. Hanako Tomizuka from Public Affairs. It was an outstanding team effort in Yonaguni, which we look forward to replicating in Ishigaki in the near future.
MAHER